



## The Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC)

University of Baltimore School of Law

### CFCC WORKS TO ENSURE THAT THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY LAW IN MARYLAND, THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD IMPROVES THE LIVES OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN AND THE HEALTH OF COMMUNITIES.

#### LEADERSHIP

**PROFESSOR BARBARA BABB**, CFCC's founding director, is an internationally recognized expert in family law and family justice system reform. In 2015, she received the Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award from the Association of Family and Conciliations Courts (AFCC), based on her long career of scholarship and activism to improve family courts and family law. Babb is Editor-in-Chief of AFCC's quarterly publication, *Family Court Review*, the leading interdisciplinary academic and research journal for family law professionals worldwide. Her recent book, *Caring for Families in Court: An Essential Approach to Family Justice* (Routledge, 2019, with Judith Moran), provides a blueprint to redesign the family justice system. Babb and CFCC staff members have played a major role in transforming the family justice system in Maryland, helping to create and launch the Family Divisions and authoring *Performance Standards and Measures for Maryland's Family Divisions* (Maryland Judiciary, 2002, with Jeffrey Kuhn).

#### FOCUS

Founded in 2000, CFCC works to improve the practice of family law and to ensure that the family justice system effectively serves the complex needs of families, children and communities. Our interdisciplinary work is rooted in two key principles:

- **Therapeutic jurisprudence**, an approach to the law which advocates a focus on the impact of family justice on the behavior, emotions and mental health of people, and
- The social science theory of **the ecology of human development**, which emphasizes a holistic approach to the resolution of family problems.

#### GOALS

- **Education of Family Law Professionals** – Create cutting-edge models of family law education that prepare law students and attorneys to address the complex issues of family law cases from a holistic, therapeutic perspective.
- **Advocacy for Family Justice System Reform** – Promote the development of Unified Family Courts to better serve the community and provide children and families with a single court system that can hear and determine all family-related issues.
- **Expert Consulting** – Help jurisdictions nationwide and internationally to improve their delivery of legal, social, judicial, administrative and other services within the family justice system, including evaluating and recommending reforms for family court systems.
- **Professional Development** – Develop training programs and tools for judges, attorneys, court professionals and services providers to build their understanding of the overwhelming problems that so often bring families and children to court.
- **Community-Based Programming** – Convene judges, attorneys, court professionals, services providers, law students and other members of the legal community with multidisciplinary teams of experts to discuss challenges and create solutions to reduce justice system interaction for families, such as improving school attendance and protecting the legal rights of children in school.

## ACHIEVING OUR MISSION THROUGH ...

### EDUCATION

**Post-J.D. Certificate in Family Law** – CFCC, with a distinguished group of family law attorneys, judges and family law faculty, developed and now houses the nation's first and only Post-J.D. Certificate in Family Law, an online program designed to prepare new and experienced attorneys for the complex issues that arise in the practice of family law.

**CFCC Student Fellows** – As part of our mission to educate future family law attorneys and to model best practices in family law, CFCC offers a 3-credit, experiential course that offers University of Baltimore law students a unique opportunity to experience first-hand how families and the family justice system interact.

**University of Baltimore Criminal Justice Interns** – CFCC recruits, trains and supervises interns from the university's criminal justice program, with the goal of instilling CFCC's core value of improving outcomes for families and children in criminal justice professionals.

### ADVOCACY & CONSULTING

**Unified Family Courts** – CFCC actively advocates for the creation of Unified Family Courts as the most successful court structure for resolving family conflicts in a therapeutic, ecological and service-based manner. This single-court system has comprehensive subject-matter jurisdiction over all cases involving children and families. In addition to extensive written advocacy, CFCC provides in-depth consultation and hands-on assistance to state and local courts interested to implement a Unified Family Court. Recent projects include a comprehensive feasibility study for implementation of a Unified Family Court for the Nebraska Judicial Branch and Douglas County, Nebraska.

### COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

**Truancy Court Program** – This model program reduces truancy by identifying and addressing the root causes of each student's school absences, reconnecting students and their families with their schools and breaking the school-to-prison pipeline for vulnerable and at-risk youth. The school-based, voluntary, non-punitive program uses a holistic approach that involves mentoring, continual and consistent follow-up and oversight, tutoring, social services and referrals, legal guidance and the powerful presence of a Maryland judge who leads the effort.

**Urban Child Symposium** – CFCC's annual symposium addresses pressing issues impacting urban children and families and presents therapeutic, holistic, multidisciplinary approaches to improve their lives.

### PUBLICATIONS & OUTREACH

CFCC contributes to the national and international conversation about family law and the experience of families and children in courts and schools through an array of publications and social media.

- **Unified Family Court Connection** – our semi-annual newsletter and the only publication in the nation devoted to the development and advancement of Unified Family Courts

- **Full Court Press Monthly E-Newsletter** – providing insights into emerging issues in family law and family justice system reform
- **Truancy Court Program Toolkit, 2nd Edition** – a hands-on resource for implementing this proven, multi-disciplinary approach to reducing truancy

## OUR TEAM

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